

Message Text

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SUBJ: GIRM MINISTERIAL REORGANIZATION, MINOR CABINET RESHUFFLE

REF: NOUAKCHOTT A-64 AND 644

SUMMARY: PRESIDENT OULD DADDAH ANNOUNCED DECEMBER 13 A MINOR REALIGNMENT OF MINISTRIES AND THE INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF CABINET POSTS BY ONE FROM 15 TO 16, WITH ALL FORMER MINISTERS RETAINING CABINET JOBS. MOVE SEEMS AIMED AT REMOVING BOTTLENECKS FROM GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS BY RELIEVING SOME MINISTERS OF MULTIPLE DUTIES. IT IS ALSO INTENDED TO CEMENT ARABIZATION OF EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AND BRING YOUTH AFFAIRS UNDER CLOSER PARTY-GOVERNMENT CONTROL, AS WELL AS ENCOURAGE FASTER MAURITANIANIZATION OF THE COMMERCIAL SECTOR. END SUMMARY.

1. ONLY FOUR OF THE PREVIOUS 15 MINISTRIES WERE AFFECTED BY THE RESHUFFLE: FINANCE AND COMMERCE; TRANSPORT, TOURISM AND HANDICRAFTS; HIGHER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION; AND SECONDARY EDUCATION, YOUTH AND SPORTS. THE NEW MINISTRY OF NATIONAL EDUCATION WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL SECONDARY, TECHNICAL AND HIGHER EDUCATION IN LINE WITH THE PRESIDENT'S DECEMBER 3 STATE OF THE NATION SPEECH ANNOUNCING EXPANDED ARABIZATION
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OF CURRICULUM. THE FORMER MINISTER OF HIGHER AND TECHNICAL

EDUCATION, MOHAMMEDEN BABBAH, BECOMES MINISTER OF NATIONAL EDUCATION. YOUTH AND SPORTS, BEREFT OF ITS SECONDARY EDUCATION FUNCTIONS, CONTINUES TO BE HEADED BY THE RELATIVELY INEFFECTUAL BA MAMADOU ALASSANE, WHO IS NOW FORMALLY CHARGED WITH REFORMING THE LARGELY MORABUND PARTY YOUTH WING, AND BRINGING DISSIDENT YOUTH B INTO THE PARTY FOLD.

2. THE NEW MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND TRANSPORT CREATED BY REMOVING RESPONSIBILITY FOR COMMERCE FROM FINANCE, AND TRANSPORTATION FROM TOURISM AND HANDICRAFTS, WILL BE HEADED BY FORMER THIRD REGION GOVERNOR, ABDALLAH OULD CHEIKH. OULD CHIEKH, A 37 YEAR-OLD GRADUATE OF THE PRESTIGIOUS PARIS SCHOOL OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, HAS CONSIDERABLE COMMERCIAL EXPERIENCE AS PERSONNEL DIRECTOR OF THE COPPER MINING COMPANY SOMIMA AND AS THE FIRST DIRECTOR OF THE STATE-OWNED BASIC COMMODITIES TRADING CORPORATION SONIMEX. THIS EXPERIENCE SHOULD WORK TO STRENGTHEN GIRM'S PROGRAM AIMED AT REPLACING FOREIGN MIDDLEMEN BY LARGE PRIVATE MAURITANIAN TRADING CORPORATIONS FORMED FROM NUMEROUS INDEPENDANT MERCHANTS. THE LOCAL ECONOMY HAS RECENTLY BEEN A BACKWATER WHILE GIRM OCCUPIED ITSELF WITH THE NEW CURRENCY EXCHANGE CONTROLS. THE NEW MINISTER, ALREADY A MEMBER OF THE INFLUENTIAL BUREAU POLITIQUE NATIONAL, SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN APPOINTED WITH MANDATE TO MAURITANIANIZE THE COMMERCIAL SECTOR AND FIND WAYS TO COMBAT THE CURRENT UPWARD FOOD PRICE SPIRAL.

3. FINALLY, FORMER MINISTER OF FINANCE AND COMMERCE SOUMARE DIARAMOUNA RETAINS ONLY HIS KEY PORTFOLIO OF FINANCE; AND, FORMER MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, TOURISM AND HANDICRAFTS MALOUM OULD BRAHAM LOSES TRANSPORT, RETAINING TOURISM HANDICRAFTS. A REVISED LISTING OF MINISTRIES AND MINISTERS FOLLOWS BY POUCH. DECON DEC 15 1974. SHURTLEFF

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